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175* 721 706 716 lish, through Chancellor's expedition to the White Sea in 1553, opened up the northern sea route. Ivan was also conscious of the economic advantages of owning a Baltic port and began operations against the Livonian order of German knights which controlled both the Gulf of Riga and the Gulf of Finland. After capturing Narva, he founded the Russian navy a century and a quarter before Peter the Great by confiscating and arming a number of German merchant vessels, for which he employed German and Swedish officers as commanders. Ivan's early successes proved a boomerang, however, since the Livonian order was dissolved and Esthonia was turned over to Sweden. This event automatically produced a collision with that country, allied with Lithuania, so that war became incessant on the western front until Ivan's death in 1584.

175* By that date the formation and the future policy of modern Russia was clearly defined. It was a foregone conclusion that future Russian sovereigns would extend Russian territory to the Black Sea. It was only a question of time when the weakening of Poland and Lithuania would bring the Dnieper valley and White Russia under Muscovite sway. It had become a cardinal item of Russian policy to control the Finnish Gulf, and maritime commerce with the west would traverse those waters [177] as soon as ports were either conquered or developed. The long period of Russian isolation from Europe was ended, and the difficult process of acquiring modern European techniques was about to begin. Russia had graduated from oriental domination and was on its way to becoming a major European power, never to approach the East again, save in the hope of conquest.

642 632 In view of the gradual evolution of Muscovite sovereignty, it is important to understand also the origins of autocracy in Moscow itself. For autocracy was by no means inevitable or universal in medieval Russia, and in the principality of Kiev the early princes had always had to reckon with town assemblies which supervised and even frequently deposed them. The influence of these assemblies was large in any medieval Russian city of which the economic and political status had been deter-

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mined independently of the princes, for one can appreciate that normal life went on even when princes shifted through inheritance or dynastic quarrels.

As a matter of fact in Novgorod, which was comparatively remote from either Kiev or Vladimir-Suzdal, the resident princes were merely delegates of the dominant state which momentarily enjoyed the lordship over the northern metropolis, but these resident princes changed so often that the citizens began to choose elective burgomasters early in the twelfth century. Eventually the princes surrendered even their control of the local courts, and in the course of time the whole administration of Novgorod and the areas it controlled became elective. The resident prince was thus transformed into a mere figurehead whose chief duty was to lead the military forces of this city-state. Popular sovereignty was expressed in the city assembly made up of all free citizens of whatever rank, and since this body was able to signify its will only by acclamation and sometimes even by pitched battles, the executive functions were exercised by a council composed of the bishop and various high elected officials, whether active or retired. The outlying domains of Novgorod—for eventually the republic colonized the territory as far as the White Sea and the Kola peninsula—enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy, but always under the surveillance of a viceroy from the metropolis, though there are cases where citizens of these colonies participated in the city assembly at Novgorod itself. Pskov began its historical career as a dependency of Novgorod, but established its independence in 1347, when the men of Novgorod bound themselves by treaty not to send any viceroy to Pskov or to exercise any further judicial rights there.

The republican principle thrived in Novgorod and Pskov because actually the princes had contributed nothing to the civic and economic growth of these areas, which owed their expansion purely to the energy of their own citizens. But in northeastern Russia the situation was quite different. There, of the two dominant forces in contemporary society (the city assembly

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and the prince) only the prince remained, and became a landed proprietor who organized the economic activity of his subjects. If he shared his authority at all, it was not with the community but with other landed proprietors and with organs of the church to which he resigned judicial rights and the collection of dues. As early as the second half of the twelfth century, when immigration from the Kiev area to the northeastern principalities assumed large dimensions, Vladimir Monomach's grandson Prince Andrew already ruled as an autocrat in the domain of Suzdal and refused to recognize the rights either of nobles or of commoners as expressed in the town assemblies. This policy cost him his life, but after his assassination the older towns in this area were unable to maintain the principles of urban democracy even before the Tartar conquest wiped out this ideal. These towns were few in number, and the rural settlements were too scattered to acquire political cohesion. Later the onslaught of the Tartars so much impoverished even such towns as then existed that their pauperized inhabitants were more concerned about their daily bread than about political rights. Furthermore, the choice and confirmation of princes depended for the time being on the caprices of the invaders, so that this function, which had formerly belonged in practice to the city assembly, died out altogether, and when the assemblies occasionally convened, it was generally with the intention of rioting and revolting against Tartar exactions. The prince, ruling on Tartar sufferance, thus became the sole remaining possessor of local authority.

As we have seen, not until the middle of the fifteenth century was it absolutely clear that the nucleus of statehood in eastern Russia was definitely located at Moscow. By that time, the regional princes were permanently attached to their several domains which they ruled as feudal lords, supported by the contributions paid by the subjects who worked their lands, and there was no difference between minor and major princes in their proprietary attitude toward their landed possessions. Since their interests were thus predominantly economic, these

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the landlord. In this way, under the early Romanovs, between 1630 and 1650, freedom of agricultural labor was abolished in Russia, and this situation prevailed until 1861.

The Muscovite system suffered a severe blow in 1598 when Theodore, Ivan the Terrible's son, died intestate and the old dynasty tracing its descent from Rurik became extinct. Since the realm and its inhabitants were regarded as the absolute property of the sovereign, the disappearance of the ruling family was a major catastrophe. Any tsar, however legitimately elected by the general assembly convoked by the patriarch of Moscow, was bound to be weakened by his dynastic illegitimacy. Hence with the reign of Boris Godunov began a period of violent revolution which lasted until 1613, largely motivated by the effort of the nobles to free themselves from exactions and restrictions which tradition forced them to endure from a scion of the old line, but which they would not suffer from anyone else.

When Michael, the first of the Romanovs, was finally elected to the throne in 1613, political self-consciousness had developed to the point where there was some realization that the sovereign actually depended on the people *and* not the reverse. On the other hand, this realization was strongest among the great nobles, the landowners, and the high officials, and they set up the new dynasty at the price of privileges not otherwise obtainable. It is also notable that the rudiments of parliamentary government, typified by a popular assembly, likewise existed in the early years of Michael's reign, but failed to mature because the level of popular political intelligence was not high enough to appreciate that elective representatives of the people had a real weapon in their potential control of finances. Hence there was no protest when the governing class allowed it to lapse. The government became intensely centralized, and with the establishment of serfdom the nobility and the gentry inevitably became a permanent ruling class upon which the crown was dependent. Since townsmen were forbidden to move into the country, and peasants could no longer establish them-

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pean campaigns were inoculated with the republican ideas disseminated by the French revolution. Essentially patriotic, they were eager to apply these ideals to their own country, to abolish the autocracy, promote republican government, raise the standard of education, and do away with the abuses of serfdom They continued with greater energy, though often with little judgment, the task begun by Radishchev.

Here the Russian revolutionary movement begins among an enlightened fraction of the ruling class. Great writers like Pushkin and Lermontov, each after brief romantic digressions, grew up to treat the seamy side of reality, both in the tragedy of the humble who are scarcely considered human by those they serve, or the misfortune of the gifted individual denied a chance at productive activity by the contemporary organization of society. Both these talents were suspected and harassed by the autocracy, and though each met his death in a duel, they were as truly victims of official conservatism as those young enthusiasts who had participated in the Decembrist conspiracy in 1825 after the death of Alexander I, and paid for it on the scaffold or amid the snows of Siberia. But from 1825 the cleavage between the government and the thoughtful section of society, once opened, was never bridged again.

This mutual hostility first became acute during the reign of Nicholas I from 1825 to the Crimean War. The Decembrist conspiracy had revealed that the turn to the right by Alexander I after 1815 had created great bitterness. The same judicial and administrative abuses that marred Catherine's reign were still rampant, state finances were disordered, and the peasants were rudely exploited. Nicholas at first had some notion of reform, but his suspicion of extragovernmental initiative was such that he hesitated to take any concrete step. The most pressing problem was serfdom: the landlords were heavily in debt and short of capital to provide employment for a rapidly increasing peasant population. Peasant disorders were menacingly frequent, but only in the western Ukraine and in Poland were reforms introduced. Educational institutions were fettered and

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far silent but ambitious proletariat. The lower strata of society were no longer looking for sympathy. They wanted power, and if properly led would break down all barriers to its attainment. The voice of the grumbling dispossessed first sounded clearly in Russian literature through Maxim Gorki's early stories, which began to appear in 1892. The best example of the young intellectual who discovered saving graces in Marxism was Lenin. He began to study Marx's *Capital* in 1888, organized a group of Marxists at Kuibyshev (Samara) in 1893, and was a social-democratic propagandist in St. Petersburg the next year. The emergence of Marxism as an active political and economic system in Russia dates from this period.

The rise of the Social Democratic party and the foundation of the more activist section known as the Bolsheviki (the maximalists) headed by Lenin himself preceded the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war by barely one year. At the same time, another radical party, the Social Revolutionaries, revived the tradition of terrorism as practiced before the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. The government pursued a policy of repression even when the necessity of prosecuting a war for which the nation was totally unprepared might well have dictated a more conciliatory attitude. Profound resentment now mastered not only the middle class but the urban proletariat, and though the police resorted to desperate provocatory acts in order to discredit the agitators, a united front against the government was rapidly forming. When open revolution broke out early in 1905, neither the middle-class liberals nor the radical Marxist groups possessed an organization equal to organizing and directing a mass movement. As a result, after the government made various constitutional concessions and the extremists showed every sign of fighting to a finish, the moderate groups gravitated away from the revolutionary idea, leaving the Marxist leaders and the workers isolated. With the urban middle class again passive, the government speedily recovered its sangfroid and applied repressive measures of forbidding severity which were far from supplying any basis for

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reconciliation with society. The new parliament was never allowed to function efficiently, and excessive parcellation of parties within it also prevented the formation of a workable united front against the government, though the fundamental tone was one of hostility.

The first World War began in this atmosphere of mutual distrust between government and society, and only a brief interval of patriotic *entente cordiale* intervened before official incompetence as revealed by repeated military defeats once more opened the breach, which was further widened by a complete collapse of transportation and economic life. General resentment was intensified by evidence of a total lack of comprehension of the situation by the tsar and his advisers, and culminated in the events of March, 1917, by which the tsar was forced to abdicate and a democratic regime was set up. The vacillations of successive moderate provisional governments played into the hands of the Bolshevik leaders, who could always bank on the support of the urban factory workers and certain sections of the army, and on November 7 they were masters of Petrograd. The subsequent fortunes of the Soviets are so close to our own times as to be matters of common knowledge.

The chasm which existed between government and society between 1894 and the first World War did not prevent simultaneous developments in Russian intellectual life. In spite of government surveillance and occasional restriction of educational facilities, a highly educated and talented middle class had evolved in Russia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Though literature declined in some degree after the death of Dostoevski, Tolstoi lived on to combine moral philosophy and creative letters until 1910. Chekhov's later plays expressed his own prevision that an epoch was about to end. A younger generation of prose writers revived traditional Russian realism in a more individualistic spirit without regard to the political and social aims that had inspired their predecessors. In poetry, symbolism sought to penetrate and express deeper

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the Austrian authorities, might have had incalculable consequences for the maintenance of their Empire.

The ideals preached by Palacký, who was as great a journalist as he was a historian, were first formulated in political terms just prior to the revolutionary year 1848, which signalized the end of Metternich's regime and the dawn of constitutionalism in Austria. It was thus Palacký who advocated an autonomous Bohemia including all the lands which had formerly belonged to the Bohemian crown, together with as much of Hungary as was populated by Slovaks: the principle, indeed, upon which the Czechoslovak state was subsequently erected. It is significant, moreover, that the German elements in Bohemia were inclined to support the Czechs in their agitation for autonomy. But the federal idea was never realized in Austria-Hungary before the monarchy dissolved in 1918, and Bohemian hopes in this direction were dashed by the Austrian Constitution of 1867, which gave the Hungarians a preferred position, as compared with the Slavs, by establishing the principle of dualism, by making Hungary practically autonomous, and by settling the Magyar domination upon Slovaks and Croats. This loss was to some extent offset by educational concessions to the Czechs, since in the previous twenty years Bohemian national consciousness had consolidated to an extraordinary degree through the increased use of the native language and the improved status of both peasants and the middle class. The romantic emphasis laid by Palacký on the glorious past of Bohemia thus proved an altogether healthy spur to the national ambition.

Though after 1867 there was never any real reconciliation between Prague and Vienna, the material prosperity of Bohemia advanced rapidly in the next fifty years, and the part still played by the German element in Bohemia before the war of 1914 is evidenced by the fact that, though they comprised only 37 per cent of the population, they paid 50 per cent of the taxes. But while the Czechs never lost sight of the federalist ideal, this principle was looked on with disfavor by the Viennese

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Chapter Five

RUSSIA AS ARBITER OF THE SLAVONIC NATIONS

IN the conditions under which it was realised, the liberation of Eastern Europe by the Soviet armies radically transformed the factors in the Slavonic problem. All the aims that the feeling of historical and racial solidarity had assigned to the Slavs were suddenly outstripped.

The First World War had resulted in their emancipation. As we have pointed out, this emancipation was due no less to the collapse of Tsarist Russia than to the victory of the Western Democracies. It had 'set up a home' for the Slavonic nations, free of mortgage on their national sovereign rights, without predominance of any one nation over the others. The two tasks imposed on them had been, on the one hand, the creation of inter-Slav ties—political, economic, and spiritual—on the other, a reorganisation of their relations with Russia.

The first of these tasks had been but imperfectly realised. The evolution of the international situation between the two wars was calculated rather to dissociate than to regroup the energies of the Slavonic world. And once again in history the Second World War had found the Slavonic nations in opposing camps.

As for relations with Moscow, they were diffident and inconsistent; where they did issue in positive agreements, these were hedged with cautious circumlocutions, and lacked a well-defined scope.

With the liberation, and the presence of the Red armies on their territory, the Slavonic peoples glimpsed a plan of their international life which was very different from the one they had known between 1919 and 1940. The new Governments had been formed under the eyes of the Liberator and, in the majority of cases, from elements devoted to the Soviet ideology. Under colour of 'anti-Fascism' a tidal wave swept away the old groups, accused of having, before or during the war, supported Axis designs. In reality the 'purge' marked an operation of a revolutionary nature, characterised by the rise to power of the

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648 175 only settled by being shelved. The English and the Americans were in a delicate position with regard to Poland; the former because it was difficult for them to forget that they had entered the war in order to safeguard Poland's independence, the latter because in the United States there is a large Polish emigration, whose electoral influence is by no means negligible. (It should not be forgotten that Roosevelt was the candidate of the minorities, the allogeneous groups, and the Catholics.)

But the entry of Soviet troops into Polish territory put an end to all hopes of postponing until the end of the war the solution of the dispute between the Polish exiles in London and the 'Association of Polish Patriots' set up in Moscow to tie the future of Poland to that of Russia. As in the case of the Baltic peoples, the Kremlin intended to deal only with a Polish authority constituted on her territory and consisting of members not suspected of any anti-Sovietic affiliations or tendencies.

Yet M. Stanislas Mikolajczyk, leader of the Peasant Party, who, on July 5, 1943, had replaced General Sikorski at the head of the Polish Government in London, sought to gain time. The Soviet press conducted a violent campaign against him and his collaborators, representing them as survivors of a retrograde Poland, the inheritance of the 'Colonels' Government', and as reincarnating the anti-democratic, anti-Russian tradition of Pilsudski.

On the day when Radio-Moscow announced the entry of the Red armies into Chelm, the communiqué was followed by the Soviet anthem, then the Polish. From this entry of the Reds into Poland dates the formation, on Russian-occupied territory, of the 'National Liberation Committee', whose first act was to repudiate allegiance to M. Mikolajczyk's Government. Thenceforward there were two Polish authorities.

642 175 The National Committee issued a manifesto to the 'People of Poland', announcing that in the Committee was invested the 'sole legal authority' existing in Poland, since it was actuated by the spirit of the democratic constitution of 1921, whereas the London Cabinet had resulted from the authoritarian constitution of April, 1935. The Committee considered itself, thenceforth, as the sole provisional legal organ of the executive power; moreover, this claim was supported by a Soviet communiqué announcing that the administration of the Polish territories

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occupied by the Russian armies would be entrusted to the Committee.

It will be noticed that in both documents the word 'Government' was avoided. No doubt that explains why neither London nor Washington received notification of the establishment of this new organism. But the Poles in London reacted indignantly. For them, this new institution was juridically valueless and, in practice, without authority. They declared that out of the fifteen members composing this Executive Directory seven were unknown, while eight were notorious Communists. The President, M. Osubka-Morawski, was a thirty-five year old workman, excluded from the Socialist Party in 1940 on account of his affiliations with Moscow. They therefore asked London and Washington to disavow these 'usurpers'.

Russia's might, and the role of the Soviet armies in the joint military effort, scarcely permitted an unfriendly attitude in regard to an initiative to which the Soviets had already given their sanction. London had not, for years, 'hedged' over misunderstandings which set the London and the Moscow exiles at loggerheads, only to take a final decision just when the Russian armies were achieving advances which left their allies far behind. So London simply announced that Great Britain continued to recognise M. Mikolajczyk's Government, whilst hoping that it would find some way of coming to an agreement with the organisation which had been set up in opposition to it. In the United States, where the Polish question caused very violent discussion during an election year, Mr. Cordell Hull entrenched himself in the silence which was his usual refuge when he was questioned concerning Eastern European problems.

In view of this negative attitude on the part of London and Washington, M. Mikolajczyk decided to seek an interview with Marshal Stalin. He went to Moscow, accompanied by his Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Romer. But his interview only served to make him realise the insurmountable prejudices which Soviet circles cherished against the London exiles.

Yet the Allies could not allow the Polish question to remain in this state of uncertainty just when a general settlement of the war was within sight. So this question was included on the agenda of the Crimean Conference in February, 1945. The Three Powers decided that the evolution of the international

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648 cleared, and awakened a reasoned optimism in English and
175 American circles.

•642 Twenty-four hours after the arrival in Warsaw of the Poles
175 invited by Moscow to join the new 'National Unity' Government the former Osubka-Morawski Cabinet resigned, and was reconstituted with the addition of these elements representing the exiles or the home Resistance movements.

The new Government included representatives of the Communist Party (which were not, as the London exiles maintained, in the majority) as well as of the Socialist, Peasant, and Democratic Parties. For the greater part it was composed of the ministers who had resigned from the Warsaw Cabinet. It kept at its head the ex-President, Osubka-Morawski, supported by two Vice-Presidents, MM. Gomulka and Mikolajczyk.

At the same time, the composition of the National Council—a sort of pre-Legislature—was also modified. Its Presidium, which played the role of provisional Chief of State, was under the leadership of M. Bierut, a Communist, who was, however, given two Vice-Presidents—M. Witos, leader of the Peasant Party, and Professor Grabski, National-Christian.

This Government declared that the first question on its agenda was that of repatriation of the Poles still residing abroad.

648 As soon as the formation of the National Unity Ministry was
175 known, the British authorities negotiated with the former exiled Government in London, with a view to its prompt dissolution.

[578] But on June 25[1] the Government-in-exile published a declaration, affirming that it refused to acknowledge any transmission of power, and proclaimed the new Warsaw Government to be 'illegal'. At the same time, it issued a manifesto to the Polish people justifying its attitude of protest, and declaring itself willing, as far as the fate of the country was concerned, to abide by a free election.

On July 5 London recognised the new Provisional Government, already approved by Moscow and Washington. This meant a break between the British authorities and the Cabinet-in-exile, which England had for so long supported and encouraged. The B.B.C. ceased to broadcast Polish programmes, and the various services installed in London were invited to wind up as quickly as possible.

1 [1945--Analyst]

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own Government, which he forced to resign. The Choubachich Cabinet disregarded this and on January 23, 1946 published a communiqué, according to which the sovereign would not return to the country until a Constituent Assembly had pronounced on the question of the régime. In his absence, the royal power would be delegated to a Council of Regency whose members would be chosen from the London Government and from the Tito Government.

On January 30 the King finally agreed to this formula, as recommended by Moscow, London, and Washington.

Then Choubachich went to Belgrade to agree with Tito on the names for the new Government. Prolonged and painful haggling resulted in the formation of the Provisional Cabinet on March 7,[1] in which Tito kept the Presidency and the War Ministry, while Choubachich assumed control of Foreign Affairs. A Serbian democrat, Milan Grol, and a Croat Agrarian, Choutei, entered the new administration.

Yugoslavia was to be reconstituted on a federative basis; the State itself officially took the name of 'Democratic and Federal Yugoslavia'. So the constitution of the 'Yugoslav' Government was followed by the formation of 'National' Governments, six in number—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia. Care had been taken not to give this federal organisation a statute and frontiers, on account of the conflicts these would not have failed to provoke; the National Assembly would, in due course, decide upon the internal structure of the State.

It remained to be seen whether Tito would bring to the management of affairs the eminent qualities of which he had given proof in the Resistance. Would history salute him not only as a detached figure in the epic background against which the tragedy of the Serbian nation is played, but also as a reconstructor of the State?

Born in 1893 in the Croat village of Klanyets, Joseph Broz was the son of an artisan. He had known hardship in his youth, and soon exhibited a revolutionary temperament. At seventeen he engineered a strike, and showed himself to be an agitator. It is said that he took his appellation of 'Tito' from the bishop of medieval Crete whose relics rest in the Church of St. Mark in Venice. Taken prisoner by the Russians in 1914, he took part

[1] [1946 -- Analyst]

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175 648 aggressive policy, or against any other State which might revive this policy, under any form whatsoever.

Backed both without and within by the might of Moscow, Tito's régime seemed to be irresistibly established.

Its[1] first care had been to renew its claim to the territories of which Yugoslavia had been defrauded immediately after the First World War. It raised the question of Trieste and its hinterland. The Yugoslav delegation in London warmly defended a case supported by detailed and absolutely pertinent documentation, based on ethnographic and economic considerations. But they were imprudent enough to allow it to be understood that they would lay claim to Aegean or Hellenic Macedonia—which was bound to alienate the goodwill of Great Britain. They also mentioned the exorbitant sum which they intended to demand from Italy by way of reparations—thereby upsetting the United States, from whom Italy was at the same time seeking material aid to help her out of her desperate financial situation.

• 642 661 175 Yet, to tell the truth, the distrustful atmosphere which grew up around the Yugoslav claims arose more directly from the form of government and the political principles established by Tito. Under colour of anti-Fascism, the régime exercised the same reprisals against all its detractors. It was accused of borrowing the methods of the totalitarian régimes; the Opposition said that it had introduced the word 'Democracy' into the name of the State in order to dispense with it in reality, as, in the past, Pavelich gave the name of 'Independent State of Croatia' to a political offshoot of the Axis. He governed, on Russian lines, a very sensitive nation, which perhaps had not a very 'Western' notion of democracy, but had always shown itself stubbornly attached to the external forms of its independence. Certainly Tito had succeeded in grouping around him zealous young men, who had been tested under fire and were indifferent to the juridical or constitutional rites which, in the West, accompany the exercise of liberty. Certainly, too, the Yugoslav National Front represented itself not as a single party but as a synthesis of all the various energies resolved to work for the restoration of public life.

656 204 625 Nevertheless to Anglo-American eyes the régime appeared to be a dictatorship. Was not its slogan—'No liberty for the enemies of liberty'—calculated to justify an administration

1 [Tito's régimes -- Analyst]

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the resurrection of Montenegro, a country of 200,000 inhabitants, which had disappeared since 1918, and of Bosnia, which had not been heard of in history since the Middle Ages, in keeping with the ideas of a 'new world' that were current in Tito's circle? And had not Tito himself, by liberating atomic nationalisms, super-Balkanised his country at a time when means of communication were suppressing distances—in other words, had he not inaugurated a policy which was opposed to history, progress, and common sense, in order to realise the midsummer night's dream of a Slavophile of the 'Forties'?

The federal régime, it will be said, has representatives in Europe—Switzerland, Russia, Austria. But Switzerland has maturity, Russia has extent, Austria has an historical and cultural homogeneity to safeguard its unity.

Was not the Yugoslav community in imminent danger from this 'State power' given to regions hitherto divided by so many memories? The Croats used to oppose the Serbs in religious matters. Between the two wars, rivalry between Catholics and Orthodox had subsided somewhat. But the elections in Austria and Hungary showed that, after the liberation, the attachment of the populations of Central Europe to the Roman Church had lost none of its force. Croatia—*antemurale Christianitatis*—could not escape this deeply-rooted tendency, still less at a time when Russia, the protectress of the Yugoslav State, reaffirmed the Orthodox tradition on which her relations with the Serbs had formerly been based. How was it possible not to see in this renewal of religious antagonism between Belgrade and Zagreb a threat of secession?

In Yugoslavia the Crown used to be (as in Belgium) the link between different peoples, traditions, and trends. On November 29, 1945, obedient to Tito's watchword, the Yugoslav Constituent Assembly, composed of the Union Assembly and the Assembly of the Nationalities, proclaimed the Federative Republic. It deposed and condemned to exile the dynasty of the Karageorgevich.

This vote was the logical conclusion of the elections and also —it must be admitted—of the errors of the young King. The latter raised a protest which was greeted, in London circles, with more sympathy than encouragement. The fate of the monarchy in Yugoslavia seemed, indeed, to be definitely settled.

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Marshal Stalin sent his congratulations to Tito and his good wishes to the 'sister nation' of Yugoslavia. The establishment of the republic was greeted everywhere as a victory for the spirit of democracy. In actual fact it is hard to believe that there is more 'democracy' in the Balkan republics than in the Scandinavian or British monarchies.

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The real question still remains to be seen—whether Tito's régime ensures a new lease of life for Yugoslav unity or whether it portends, sooner or later, a disruption of that unity, which might this time be irreparable. It is by no means impossible that in the next few years, even months, the evolution of Yugoslav life may be characterised by a gradual weakening of the ties between the Serbs and the Croats and a correlative strengthening of solidarity between Serbs and Bulgars—in other words, by an end of the union of Southern Slavs, and an attraction of part to the East.

On the international scale, the future of Yugoslavia is at the mercy of the super-powers who are the arbiters of peace. So that all depends on the importance which the Balkan world holds in the policy of Russia who, in Central Europe and in Asia, is occupied with interests of far wider scope. And here it is as well not to forget that, during the time of the Tsars, the Balkan peoples always bore the brunt of all efforts at *rapprochement* between Russia and Austria-Hungary. Will they, tomorrow, form the medium of exchange between the U.S.S.R. and the Anglo-American democracies, without whose capital it would be difficult for them to exploit their natural resources?

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Of all the liberated Slav States, it was, as might be expected, Czechoslovakia which showed most practical sense. She managed her return to liberty without any unnecessary clashes or violence.

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No serious difficulty arose between the London Government-in-exile and the Resistance. On May 8, 1944, Benes signed an agreement with Moscow concerning the administration of the liberated territories. On the following October 29 he declared that, after the war, the affairs of the Republic would be so organised as to avoid a repetition of the events of 1938. 'Czechoslovakia will be a fully decentralised Republic, organised

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on the basis of respect for the principle of nationalities'. No reference to a federal system.

He returned to Czechoslovakia early in March, 1945, and, from Kosice, he followed the last stages of the liberation. On May 10 the national flag again floated from Prague Castle and Cathedral; a few days later Benes made a triumphal entry into the city.

The Government (formed on April 5, under the presidency of M. Fierlinger, and composed of twenty-five members, seven of whom were Communists) avoided the mistake made by the majority of the liberated countries, by postponing the elections until passions had had time to subside a little. The authorised political parties, four in number, agreed on the allocation of mandates to the Provisional National Assembly, which numbered 300 deputies, including 100 for Slovakia. On April 14[1] an electoral body chosen by the local National Committees nominated the members of this Assembly. 'The Czechs', Benes said, 'must take radical measures, while at the same time avoiding extremism'. That was the whole programme of the Czechoslovak Popular Front.

In the international order, the Government observed the same prudence. Benes's realistic attitude towards Soviet Russia is well known. 'The Czechs are a Slavonic people, and they are specially drawn towards the Russians, whom they understand better than any other people'. But Czech culture, and the democratic education of the Czech people, are fundamentally Western. The President continually returned to that assumption. Czechoslovakia is an intermediary region between two civilisations; its historical evolution, its psychology, its intellectual and social structure, all have affinities with the Anglo-American and French democracies.

The Soviet orientation was represented by the Communists, under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister, M. Clement Gottwald, and the Minister of National Education, Zdenek Nejedly, a celebrated musicographer, who attended the Moscow Panslav Congresses. But their influence was exerted moderately, and solely on the lines of the national interest. In reality, the Czech people, with their habits of thrift, their appreciation of property, their aversion to conformity, are fundamentally opposed to the Marxist ideology.

1 [1945 -- Analyst]

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648 175 As for the question of the Polish-Czech frontiers, the Prague Government wanted a return to the pre-Munich *status quo*; it will be seen later that the claim to the Teschen Basin, occupied by the Poles since 1938, delayed the return to normal status in the relations between Warsaw and Prague.

As regards the Serbs of Lusatia (Wends and Sorbs), they sent petition after petition to the peace arbitrators, claiming a hearing and justice. They submitted two memoranda, one on February 1, 1946, to the United Nations, the other in the month of May, to the Four Powers Conference in Paris. They returned to the attack on July 6, to ask for the separation of Lusatia from Germany. They were invariably put off until the German problem should be discussed by the Conference. Czechoslovakia, who had already espoused their cause at the time of the discussion of the Versailles Treaty,[1] signified that she saw in their separation from the Reich a guarantee for her own security.

101 These Lusatians are the remnant of a large tribe which must formerly have been the vanguard of the Slavs on the march towards Bavaria. In the ninth century the country was erected into a principality. But, of all the Slavonic groups, this is the one which has encountered the least favourable conditions for the development of a lasting political unity.

* * *

000 Now a few words on the evolution of the internal and external policies of each of the small Slav States while the treaties were in the negotiation stage.

• 642 175 On January 15, 1946, Yugoslavia voted her Federal Constitution, which set up the six People's Republics mentioned in the previous chapter. (The 'People's Republic of Serbia' included the two autonomous provinces of Voïvodin and Kossovo). Each of these republics sent twenty-five deputies to the Peoples' Council. They were sovereign States—except for the functions reserved to the central power (peace and war, internal security, basic legislation, currency, transport, postal services, radio, Customs, immigration, etc.)—*i.e.*, essentially in matters of education, public health, and social justice.

As in Russia, actual power lay with the Presidium of the Legislature, composed of thirty members, elected by the Assembly

[1] See above, p. 41.

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and responsible to it. The Assembly comprised two Chambers, the Federal Council and the Council of Nationalities; the former was elected by all the citizens, the latter appointed by the republics and autonomous districts. The Constitution established the right of referendum, compulsory military service, the separation of Church and State. Private property was recognised, up to a maximum of 25–30 hectares. But foreign trade and the greater part of the means of production, mining resources, springs, hydraulic power, woods, transport, wireless, etc. were under State control.[4] The Federated Republics were organised, and elected their Governments, early in 1946 (Bosnia-Herzegovina on February 15, Serbia on February 20, Slovenia on February 23; it will be noticed that the latter took the name of 'Popular Republic of the Slovenes'—obviously with the intention of serving as a magnetic centre for the Slovenes who remained under Italian or Austrian domination).

The promulgation of the new Constitution closed the first stage in post-war developments. The new Federal Government was introduced to the Legislature on February 2, 1946. Its President was Tito, who held the portfolio of National Defence, assisted by two Vice-Presidents, one Communist, the Slovene Edward Kardelj, a militant member of the Slovene Workers' Associations and principal instigator of the Constitution, and one Republican, the Serb, Jasa Prodanovich. Foreign Affairs were entrusted to Stanoje Simich. Kardelj was President of the Federal Control Commission, an all-powerful organism which supervised the acts of the Ministers and of the President himself. The spokesman of the Communist Party was Milovan Djilas, who was responsible for the Youth Movement. The President of the Presidium was a Croat, Ivan Ribar, a former Deputy of the Serbo-Croat Coalition, President of the Constituent of 1921 and one of the authors of the so-called Constitution of Vidovdan. After having joined the Democratic Party, he left it at the time of the dictatorship of King Alexander. Under the occupation he did liaison work between the Republicans and the

[4] The arms of the Federal State represent a field, between two sheaves of corn, connected by a ribbon inscribed: '22nd November, 1943'. Between the tips of the ears of corn is a five-pointed star; in the middle of the field five torches, bending over, converge into a single flame. The federal flag is red, white and blue (with the red at the bottom), and has a red star in the middle.

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648 175 —in other words, renounce the very principles for which they would have been elected.

Pressed by solicitations or criticisms from London and Washington, M. Gheorgiev placed himself under the ægis of Moscow. He went to Russia on January 7, 1946. 'I am glad', he said on landing, 'to be within the fortress of the Slavonic peoples, which, thanks to the wise direction of Generalissimo Stalin, has become the hope of the whole of democratic humanity'. And to give a yet more decisive proof of the credit which he enjoyed in Moscow, his visit was immediately followed (on January 10) by that of M. Vyshinsky to Sofia.

[661] These manifestations did indeed strengthen the Bulgarian Government majority, but they disarmed neither the English nor the Americans, who protested, in diplomatic notes, against the police tactics of the régime, and the arrests of politicians.[8] In return, the Russians accused the Western Democracies of giving a false interpretation to Moscow's decisions affecting Bulgaria, and of encouraging subversive elements.

642 175 In Sofia, they showed signs of anxiety over the persistence of this lack of harmony on the eve of the conclusion of the peace treaties, on which the future of Bulgaria was to depend. M. Gheorgiev hoped to clarify the situation by resigning on March 22. But the Opposition imposed, as a condition of its accepting office, the exclusion of any Communist from the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office. Agreement proved impossible; another Gheorgiev cabinet, restricted, like the previous one, to the parties of the Patriotic Front, was formed on March 29, 1946.

A few days later, this Government promulgated a decree convening the National Assembly, charged with revising the Constitution on Republican lines. The monarchical régime was denounced to the country as the cause of all its misfortunes—a statement which could, with greater truth, have been applied to the Treaty of San Stefano and the Macedonian psychosis it had

661 [8] For three months, the arrested men included Assen Stamboliiski, son of the famous Agrarian leader, assassinated in 1923, and a member of the Central Committee of the Agrarian Party. One of the grievances harboured by the Bulgarian Agrarians against the Communists was the attitude of neutrality maintained by the latter at the time of the *coup d'état* of June 9, 1923, which had marked the triumph of 'reaction' over Stamboliiski's régime.

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engendered. For the occasion, they forgot the fact that the monarchy had, more than once, had its prerogatives disputed by dictatorships. Only by assassination did Ferdinand get rid of Stamboulov, and Boris of Stamboliiski. And M. Gheorgiev himself had been able to overthrow parliamentary government only because the army had given him a helping hand. The will of the sovereign had entered little into that event.

However that might be, the fate of the monarchy was settled. By doing away with it, the Bulgarian people were convinced that they were clarifying their destiny. The young King Simeon II, then aged 8, was living in Vranja with his mother and his sister, in an isolation which was practically exile, while the royal duties were performed by three regents appointed by the National Front. On September 8, 1946, the Bulgarian nation, by a huge majority (3,800,000 votes to 179,000), voted in favour of the republic, which was proclaimed on the 15th of the same month. The following week Simeon II, under the care of the Queen-Mother, who was dressed in deep mourning, embarked on a Turkish vessel bound for Egypt, where he was to join his maternal grandfather, ex-King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy. One newspaper *Otetchestvene Front* (Homeland Front) published, by way of farewell, an article by General Hristo Stölkov, reproaching the defunct monarchy for having isolated Bulgaria from the other Slavonic peoples. 'It is no accident if, at the time of the first imperialist war, all the Slavs [*sic*] were on the side of the Allies, whilst Bulgaria alone threw in her lot with Germany'.

The convening of the electoral body for October 27[1] gave rise to a diplomatic passage of arms among the Allies. The British Government protested against the obstacles put in the way of the Opposition's campaign, and against the persecution to which the Agrarians were subjected. And Mr. Byrnes asked the Allied Control Commission, sitting in Sofia, to take adequate measures to guarantee the integrity of the poll. Russia's representative on the Commission, General Birousov, opposed the consideration of this request, which he denounced as foreign interference with Bulgarian home affairs.

The elections gave the anticipated results; the Home Front secured 346 seats (of which 277 went to the Communists) as against the Opposition's 101 seats. It would appear that this

1 [1946 - Analyst]

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666 175 result even exceeded the expectations of M. Gheorgiev, who took fright at the excitement stirred up in the country by the Communists—hence this appeal to the population: 'Victory often intoxicates men, and defeat makes them lose their self-control. Tension resulting from elections, if not rapidly mastered, may help to foster a state of excitement prejudicial to order and tranquillity. The Government earnestly exhorts all citizens strictly to observe the laws'.

Spectacular as was the triumph of governmental coalition, it did not reach the overwhelming majorities of which Russia and Yugoslavia held the secret. In particular, the ministerial fraction belonging to the *Zveno* was beaten, so that the country had modified, to the advantage of the Communists, the relative strengths within the coalition. Now, in a nation which had neither capitalism nor trusts nor large industrial concerns nor *latifundia*, the word *Communist* had a meaning which was much more political than social.* It was above all the victory of the 'Russianisers', long held in check by the official policy.

[563] It must moreover be admitted that, renewing the gesture of the liberating Tsar, the Soviet Union had just saved the Bulgarian people by protecting them from the consequences of their rulers' collusion with the Axis. The question that still remained was whether Russia would not have preferred to be defended in Sofia by traditionally 'national' elements, rather than by a party too openly connected with Moscow, and whose leader, George Dimitrov, the hero of the Leipzig trial, was thought to be a tool of Russia.

• 642 175 As a logical consequence of the elections, a new Government was in fact formed by Dimitrov on November 23.[1] It included ten Communists, five Agrarians, two Socialists, two members of the *Zveno* and one Independent. The ex-President, Kimon Gheorgiev, held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. The semi-official press saw it as 'the most democratic Government Bulgaria has ever had', whilst the Opposition emphasised the complete hold on power which the Communists had obtained.

648 175 This Government's vital tasks were to be signing the peace and voting the Constitution. On February 12, 1947, it secured

[162] * The working-class strengths, on which the Communists rely, are very small; indeed, 80% of the population are engaged in agriculture, not to mention tradesmen, civil servants, and members of the liberal professions.

1 [1946 - Analyst]

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from England the legal recognition which she had refused to a non-Communist Ministry. However, the Foreign Office felt bound to state that this recognition 'by no means implied that Great Britain considered the methods previously employed by the Bulgarian Government to consolidate its position, or the conditions under which the elections had been organised, as conforming to the spirit and the letter of the Yalta declaration concerning Liberated Europe'.

The Bulgarian reply dismissed these objections, but expressed the Sofia Government's satisfaction and its desire to respect the peace treaty.

The Constitution submitted to the Legislature had to reconcile the exigencies of a very Leftist democracy with the specific traits of the Bulgarian nation, and the laws of its historical development. It was not federal, like the Russian or Yugoslav constitutions, but unitary. Bulgaria was to be a parliamentary republic, in which authority belonged to the people, whose will was expressed by means of elections or a referendum. The President was elected for four years (by a two-thirds majority) by the Legislature, plus one representative from each Cantonal Council and five representatives from each Departmental Council. The Legislature was elected for four years, on the basis of one member for every 25,000 inhabitants.

The Constitution sanctioned the right to private property and the right of inheritance, but placed in the hands of the State the country's natural resources, its sub-soil, transport, marine and fluvial navigation, communications, radio, and external trade. The new Bulgarian economy was inspired by the co-operative principle as understood in the Slavonic tradition (*mir* or *zadrouga*) rather than by pure collectivism.

In his ministerial declaration M. George Dimitrov had defined friendship with U.S.S.R. as 'the corner-stone of his foreign policy', but promised to endeavour to normalise relations with London and Washington. He expressed his gratitude 'to the sister nations—and particula ly the new Yugoslavia[10]—for the help they had rendered to Bulgaria at the Peace Conference'.

Indeed, Bulgaria had no reason to complain of the Con-

[10] Who, on the previous June 15, had wiped out certain Bulgarian reparations.

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war, now had only three—Russia, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. One aspect of her new position which represented an innovation was her transformation into a great maritime nation, thanks to the three ports, Stettin, Gdynia, and Danzig, and to her 312 miles of coast-line. Nevertheless, her destiny would henceforth be more closely bound to that of Central Europe, while remaining subordinate to the *entente* with Moscow.

The western frontiers were approved by the plebiscite of June 30, which covered not only the frontier-ratification, but also the abolition of the Senate and the economic organisation of the State (Agrarian reform and nationalisation of key industries). The first ballot gave 10,534,697 in favour and 995,584 against; the second gave 7,844,522 in favour and 3,686,029 against; the third, 8,896,106 in favour and 2,634,446 against.

This popular referendum did not have the tranquillising effects that had seemingly been expected. Poland continued to be a prey to 'terrorist' agitation, the repression of which, in turn, gave rise to scenes of violence and to exactions. While dissociating himself from the extremists, the leader of the Polish Peasant Party, M. Mikolajczyk, himself protested against the way in which the referendum had been carried out (except in Cracow, where the 'Noes' had been in the majority). So the British Government reserved its opinion on the legitimacy which this poll conferred on the régime, and awaited the general elections before giving legal recognition to the new state of affairs. And the whole of 1946 was taken up with exchanges of subacid notes between London and Washington on the one side and Warsaw on the other. The Anglo-Americans denounced the persecution to which the Opposition was subjected, and considered that the Polish Government was failing in the undertaking given in execution of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, to guarantee the liberty of elections. But the Russians interpreted quite differently both the scope of these agreements and the meaning of the word 'liberty'. And so the most obvious result of the diplomatic offensive on the part of England and the United States was to intensify Polish-Sovietic solidarity.

The formation, in June, of a National Unity Government under the Presidency of M. Osubka Morawski seemed, for the time being, to dissipate the apprehensions of the Anglo-Americans, although the dissident Polish Government in London

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accused the hierarchy, in connection with the Kielce pogrom,[18] of not having adopted a sufficiently bold attitude towards anti-Semitism, and of having refused to sign the declaration of all political parties, condemning this racial crime.

The Cardinal addressed to the foreign press declarations in which, while deploring the acts of violence, he attributed them largely 'to the dominant position assumed by the Jews in the Polish Government, and to the efforts made to give Poland a governmental structure that the majority of the country did not desire'. As may be imagined, these words aroused passionate comments. The same remark applies to the pastoral letter addressed to the faithful on the eve of the elections, asking them to vote only 'for persons, lists or programmes in favour of Catholic teaching and morals'. Without mentioning the Marxist Parties by name, the pastoral reminded Catholics that they must not belong to 'organisations whose principles are contrary to this teaching and this morality'. The Cardinal was anxious, he said, to 'reconcile the Christian faith with a sound revolutionary movement'.

* * *

It was in Czechoslovakia that the adaptation of political and social life to the new state of affairs was achieved with the minimum of clashes and the maximum of realism. The Second Republic was stabilised under the form of a 'Socialising Democracy' (according to President Benes's term), half-way between Communism and the Bourgeois State. It no longer had the same exterior structure as Masaryk's republic, having adopted a *sui generis* type of bi-national community, with equal rights for Czechs and Slovaks. There was another innovation—a still more vital one—the elimination of minorities, whose presence and militancy had hindered its development, before contributing to its dislocation under the Hitlerian onrush.

[18] In this locality,[1] on July 4, 1946, there was a pogrom, arising out of a trifling cause, in the course of which 45 Jews were massacred. Nine of the presumed authors of this massacre were condemned to death. The clandestine organisations were accused of having fomented anti-Semite passions, whereas, in reality, the latter had remained very much alive in Poland—as witness the testimony of Dr. Shoskes, South America's representative in the Society for Assistance to Jewish Immigrants, and M. Segal, delegate to the World Jewish Congress of New York. Despite the frightful losses they suffered during the occupation, which reduced them to an insignificant minority, the Polish Jews, for the most part, aspire to leave the country. This is one of the indirect aspects of the Palestinian problem.

[1] [in Kielce - Analyst]

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The problem of the relations between Prague and Bratislava was difficult to settle. It had handicapped the political development of the country from 1919 to 1938, and six years of separate life (from 1938 to 1944) had not failed to add fresh grievances to the old ones. In addition to all this, Slovakia herself suffered from an internal crisis—antagonism between a heterogeneous Catholic majority and a united, combative, Communist minority. The Democratic Party, which comprised the Catholics, presented a front only in the struggle against Marxism, the Soviet stranglehold, and Czech Centralism. In the face of constructive problems it was divided. It suffered, moreover, under the suspicion of having owed its electoral triumph only to the Autonomists and to the former 'collaborators'. Here, as elsewhere, the Communist Party sought to monopolise all the merit of the Resistance.

And Slovak particularism had not disarmed. This was made clear when, in the summer of 1946, the central Government ordered exchanges between Czech and Slovak military units; this order met with violent resistance.

However, that is a problem which the Czechs have had time to study, and in which they have acquired bitter, but profound, experience. It is a psychological rather than a political problem, affected by social and religious reactions, not to mention the campaign against the régime carried on by Slovak exiles in America, under the leadership of M. Stephan Osusky, former Czechoslovak Minister in Paris. It is possible that the fundamental difference between the two peoples may lie in the fact that one was under the heel of the German, the other of the Magyar.

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On June 24 was concluded an agreement destined to become the foundation of the new Czechoslovak community, based on a formula which lies half-way between decentralisation and autonomy. This is how it works. Apart from the three reserved departments (Foreign Affairs, National Defence, and Foreign Trade), Slovakia has her own organs of representation and government: a National Council of one hundred members, drawn from the parties, empowered to settle purely Slovak questions; an Executive Council composed of fifteen Commissars appointed by the Czech Government on the nomination of the Slovak National Council. These Commissars are, at one and the same time, real Ministers as far as Slovak affairs are

[1. 1946 - Analyst]

6; Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

concerned, and executive agents for Prague for Czechoslovak affairs. This was the solution found for the dualism previously existing in Czechoslovakia.

In virtue of this system the Slovaks have institutions which enable them to settle their own problems, while at the same time participating in the general control of the country. Hence the current joke about the 'Slovakisation of Czechoslovakia'.

Thus did President Benes succeed in adapting the spiritual heritage of Masaryk, and his own tendencies, to an internal and external situation very different from that which, in 1918, had shaped the rebirth of the Czech nation. And yet Benes took pains to safeguard signs of independence, and to maintain bonds of spiritual solidarity with the West, in order to attest his faith in his country's mission as a mediatrix, her role as a stabilising factor between the East and the West of the Continent. But the new Czechoslovakia no longer reflected the image that Masaryk had popularised—that of a European Slavism formed in the school of the Liberal Democracies.

The first elections carried out after the liberation—those of May 26, 1946—gave a slight majority to the Marxists, who had 153 seats out of the 300 of which the National Assembly was composed.[19]

This shift in the majority had little practical effect. The internal policy, based on nationalisation,[20] and the realisation of a very advanced social programme, underwent the fewer modifications, inasmuch as the Communists, anticipating their electoral victory, had already secured possession of the principal control levers.

[19] The results were as follows:—

	Votes	*Percentage*
Bohemia-Moravia		
Communists	2,205,658	40.17
National-Socialists	1,298,967	23.66
Populars	1,010,920	20.23
Social-Democrats	855,771	15.59
Slovakia		
Democrats (Christian)	988,275	61.43
Communists	490,257	30.48
Liberty Party	67,575	4.20
Labour Party	49,983	3.11

As will be seen, the majority was reversed in Bohemia and in Slovakia.

[20] The nationalisation programme which took effect on March 13, 1946, placed the majority of the key-industries under State control. Commenting on this event, the Minister of Industry declared: 'This day marks a date in the history of the world's industry'.

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186* 175 From the external point of view, Czechoslovakia remained within the orbit of the Soviet power, on which, henceforth, depended her security and her conception of the balance of power in Europe.

But the maintenance of national unity, the agreement of parties, the conciliatory realism which they brought to the control of the State, revealed a spirit of discipline and a maturity such as could not, at that time, have been found in any other Slavonic State. Perhaps we must give equal praise to the clearsightedness with which M. Benes, in his Christmas message for 1946, denounced the weaknesses and the blemishes which still remained to be eliminated from the régime; how many other countries might have profited by his warning!

'In all political parties there lurk elements that are bad, morally tainted; products of the great wars and of the revolutionary periods. Such individuals must disappear from our political life. We must wean our young people from tendencies to indiscipline, to idleness, to immorality in relations between the sexes. We must combat the growing scourge of alcoholism, the black market, and clandestine trade. We must encourage a [163] family policy; whereas, in 1938, the excess of births over deaths was 80,000, in 1945 it is only 7,828'.

•642 175 Elected for two years, the new Constituent Assembly met for the first time on June 18.[1] The next day it acclaimed Edward Benes as President of the Republic, in that same Vladislas Hall where he had been elected for the first time, in 1935. The Government, constituted on the following July 2, was presided over by M. Clement Gottwald, Leader of the Czech Communist Party. It included six Czech Communists, three Czech Social Democrats, four Socialists of the Benes Party, four Czech Catholics, five Slovak Democrats.

648 In the next chapter the reader will find an outline of the religious problem, seen from the angle of the Orthodox offensive. Faithful to their pre-war tradition, Czechoslovak official circles renewed with the Vatican relations which they did their utmost to render as trusting as possible, in spite of the agnosticism of the régime and its Hussite sympathies. The first chargé d'affaires to the Holy See, Dr. Schwarzenberg, was appointed in January, 1946. Since the previous autumn, the Vatican had already been represented in Prague; in March, Mgr. Ritter was

1 [1946 -- Analyst]

61 Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

666 175 98.89 per cent (110,180 blank votes), the electors having no other option than to vote for the 'Front' or to register a blank vote.

185 175 Faithful to the guidance of Benes, Jean Masaryk and Ripka, the Third National Front Government, presided over by Gottwald, endeavoured to secure the triumph of a policy of equilibrium between East and West, between Liberalism and Marxism. 'In our country', declared Benes, 'under the pressure of the masses, Communism has become national.'

648 175 The first signs of Soviet pressure were seen when, after the Czech Cabinet had decided, in July, 1947, to accept an invitation to attend the Paris Conference for the application of the Marshall Plan, it was forced, on orders from Moscow, to withdraw its acceptance.

[578] The final crisis was reached in February, 1948. An exceedingly violent press campaign was launched against Vaclav Nosek, Minister of the Interior, as the result of a purge which followed the discovery of illegal arms deposits. The Communist Party accused the National Socialists (Benes Party), the Popular Democrats and the Slovak Democrats of attempting to constitute an 'anti-Communist bloc' within the Government, and of paralysing the legislative power of the National Assembly. Tension reached its peak with the approach of the elections, then fixed for April 11, 1948.

668 • 642 175 The partisans of obedience to Moscow centred their efforts around the nucleus of the police and the trade union organisations. A 'Central Action Committee' was established, to back up, by mass movements, the offensive led by President Gottwald and his Communist colleagues against the moderate section of the Government. On February 20, 1948, the Ministers belonging to the three incriminated parties resigned. The Marxists held demonstrations in the streets; a political strike was declared on February 4, and the Congress of Works' Committees demanded the removal of the 'reactionaries'. President Benes, taken unawares by the suddenness of this attack, rejected the idea of a Government of Civil Servants and, on February 25, he formed a new National Front Ministry, with Gottwald as President, Gapotocki as Vice-President, Jean Masaryk at the head of Foreign Affairs. The Communists secured entire control of this Cabinet, which was in favour of unconditional collaboration with the Soviet Union. The opposition was reduced to

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helplessness; Benes capitulated before Gottwald's ultimatum. It was the end of the Putsch which Hubert Ripka later described as a 'prefabricated revolution'. On March 9[1] Jean Masaryk, Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote a personal letter to Stalin, in which he denounced the intervention of Zorine, the Soviet Ambassador, in the events of February: 'When a time of mortal danger for the country, and for all Slavs, comes, you will have in Prague nothing but a Government hated by the country, despised by the *élite*, and relying entirely on the bayonets of its police organisations'. The next day Masaryk committed suicide: contradictory versions of his death were circulated, although the above-mentioned letter had made clear his intention of ending his life.

Thus the inspirer of two Czech liberations, heir to the thought of Thomas Masaryk, disappeared in shameful oblivion; the commentaries in the Communist press, in which he was later accused of having betrayed the interests of the country, lead us to wonder whether his inglorious end did not save him from an even more tragic fate. Posterity will pronounce a mixed judgment on his political achievement. His tomb might fittingly have been engraved with this epitaph, taken from one of his books (*Whither the Slavs?*): 'The existence and the prosperity of all the Slav States is inseparably bound up with a régime of true democracy, that is to say, a régime in which the elementary principles of individual liberty, liberty of conviction, liberty of religion, liberty of political expression and liberty of public opinion, are guaranteed and fully respected'.

As for Benes, whose authority was henceforth without scope, on June 7, 'for health reasons', he resigned his presidential office, which he had held since June 19, 1946, in a message by which he invited his fellow-citizens 'to encourage liberty and consciously enjoy it'. He died a few months later, on September 3, 1948.

The events of February were to be mentioned at the United Nations Security Council, with a view to appointing a commission of inquiry—which was opposed by a Soviet veto (May 24).

On March 9, 1948, was voted the Constitution which made Czechoslovakia a 'democratic peoples' republic'. It instituted a Single House system, and proclaimed the equality of Czechs and Slovaks: the republic was to be a bi-national State. Unlike

1 [1948 - Analyst]

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642 175 563 the preceding Constitutions, this one contained no clause designed to protect minorities.

[666] The elections, postponed until May 30,[1] gave 88 per cent of the votes (6,429,145) to the National Front, but the figure of 770,100 blank voting slips exceeded that anticipated by the Government. The latter was, however, fully master of the situation. On June 14 Clement Gottwald was elected President of the Republic, on the unanimous vote of the 296 deputies present. Under the chairmanship of Zapotocki, he formed a Cabinet on the lines of the previous one (sixteen Communists or supporters, and six non-Communists); the portfolio of Foreign Affairs remained in the hands of Klementis, who replaced Masaryk. The new Head of the Government announced implacable repressive action against 'those guilty of disorder or confusion, who seek to hinder the reconstruction of the country'.

[661] 659 798 175 Indeed, during the months that followed, there was a vigorous purging of diplomacy, the army, the police. But, in 1949, it was the religious question which was to dominate political life, owing to an offensive conducted against the Roman Church, opposing the old Czech Hussite spirit to Catholicism, the dominant trait in the Slovak national character.

Gottwald and his ministers, relying on this 'religious geography' peculiar to Czechoslovakia, embarked upon a struggle with the clergy in the domain of monopoly of the schools. They pursued the contest by seeking to alienate the Catholic Church from her natural hierarchy, and by encouraging the 'schism' of the Czech 'National' Church. To protest against the obstacles put in the way of the exercise of the cult, the bishops drew up a pastoral letter, setting forth the conditions required in order to regularise relations between the Church and the State. The Government forbade the distribution of the pastoral; infringements of this decree, specially numerous in Slovakia, were sternly repressed. Mgr. Beran, Archbishop of Prague, was detained in his palace; the civil authority created 'Catholic Action', an official organisation placed under the control of priests with Communist leanings. At the head of this movement was the Minister of Public Health, Father Plojhar, suspended by the ecclesiastical authorities for having sought a legislative mandate without his bishop's permission.

Tension rose with the 'resolutions' passed on June 28 by the

1 [1948 -- Analyst]